THE EFFECTS OF FAMILIAL BONDS AND PEER GROUP PERCEPTIONS ON ADOLESCENT RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE: A STUDY OF INTERFAITH FAMILIES

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INTRODUCTION

No generation is exactly like the one before it. Each one alters the landscape of the country in terms of its innovations, beliefs, policies, and practices. Although parents try to instill basic values in their children, ultimately even these will be shaped by their own life experiences. What the child learns as they grow, either from their parents or from society, has the potential to influence not only their own lives, but also those of the next generation.

Parents make decisions as to what core values and ideals they wish to instill in their children with the hope that they will adopt them as their own. These values are often based on the parent's culture, religion, own life experience, and family tradition. Variations in these generational transmissions are what influence larger shifts in culture (Laland, Feldman & Cavalli-Sforza 2002). Social science has been analyzing these demographic changes for years, watching for trends in the generational shifts. It is important to understand what is changing within the family to facilitate these shifts.

One of the most important things which parents hope will have a strong impact on their children is religion. Religion is often seen as the moral compass and has been shown to have a strong influence in many other areas of social life. Shifts in how religious faith is passed on, and what aspects of it are passed, could have a considerable effect on the future of churches and how religion is discussed in society.

One trend which has become more prevalent over the past several years is interfaith relationships, when individuals from different religions marry (Bisin, Topa & Verdier, 2004; Chaves, 2011; Nelson, 1990; Arweck & Nesbitt, 2010). In the past, these types of relationships

often resulted in divorce, one partner abandoning religion, or converting to the religion of their spouse (Lehrer 1998; Nelson, 1990). However, in the past several decades has shown an increase in those choosing to keep their partner, and their faith (Arweck & Nesbitt, 2010; Nelson, 1990). This practice is not without its setbacks, especially when it comes to child rearing. Not only must each spouse navigate both their own individual spirituality, but then they must work together to establish a spiritual path for their children as well.

These differences between the religious lives of same and interfaith families is the focus of the current research. As with any other aspect of culture, religious belief is easier to pass on to the next generation when both parents are in agreement, providing a stronger and more cohesive base for their child's beliefs. (Bader & Desmond, 2006; Myers, 1996; Gniewosv & Noack, 2012). Since children acquire religion from imitating and modeling the behaviors of their parents, same-faith parents are at an advantage in this aspect (Bisin et al. 2004; Blackwell & Lichter 2004; Kalmijn, 1998). According to the research of King and Mueller (2003), same-faith parents have more, "spiritual capital," than interfaith families, in that they exhibit more cohesive religious involvement that can then be modeled by the children. This is not the case in interfaith families, where the child can either be exposed to one religion, no religions, or multiple religions in various combinations (Arweck & Nesbitt, 2010; Edwards, Caballero, & Puthussery, 2010). This lack of consistency within the home weakens the influence of any faith system, and leaves the religious preference of the child in a greater state of flux (Myers 1996).

Further complicating this decision is exposure to various social influences, and how those experiences can shape the child's view of religion. Social pressure from peer groups can play a role in religious identification formation, particularly in adolescents (Lopez, Huynh, &

Fuligni, 2011; Song & Siegel, 2008). Young adults are more susceptible to peer influence than older children due to the transition away from family towards the social group as their primary influence (Song & Siegel, 2008).

Given the previous research on religious transmission, there are several questions which present themselves. The current research examines the intersection of family and social groups and how they each work to influence the religious identity formation of adolescents from interfaith families. Specifically two research questions will be explored. First, which factors predict the religious identification of children in interfaith families? Secondly, how do family dynamics and peer attitudes influence religious doubt in children of interfaith families compared to those of similar same-faith households?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Methods of Cultural Transmission

In every branch of sociology, culture acts as the mechanism by which all human behaviors are influenced. Culture can dictate the religion, language, traditions, behaviors, and perceptions of its members. Individuals are influenced, not only by their own culture, but also by exposure to the culture of others. Through this exposure, generations are given the opportunity to select various aspects of the cultures which they take on as their own. Cultures survive on the predicate that the behaviors, language, values and ideas of a group will be passed from one person to another (Laland et al., 2002). This process of transmission also encourages group cohesion by fostering a sense of shared experience, and acts as the foundation of identity formation among its members (Aldous & Hill, 1965).

According to research, there are two primary avenues by which cultural ideas can be transferred; horizontal and vertical. Horizontal transmission are the cultural ideas passed among peers (Laland et al., 2002; Bar-El, García-Muñoz, Neuman, & Tobol, 2013). This type of cultural transfer is especially strong among younger adolescents and can influence a wide breadth of ideas and behaviors. Research has shown that peers can hold significant sway in areas ranging from eating habits to delinquency and sexual activity (Costello, 2010; Monahan, Steinberg & Cauffman 2009; Song & Siegel, 2008). This influence does propose a causality problem however since it is difficult to know if the children are selecting peer groups based on commonalities or conforming to the norms of their social group (Costello, 2010; Monahan et al, 2009; Song & Siegel, 2008). It is important to note that not all peer influence will alter behavior; the strength of the influence depends on many factors. The age of the child, the size of the peer group, the type of behavior, and the relationship between the children all contribute to the degree of influence (Song & Siegel, 2008).

Vertical transmission refers to those characteristics which are passed from one familial generation to the next, generally from parent to child (Laland et al., 2002; Bar-El et al, 2013). A great deal of research has shown that children are strongly influenced by the ideals and behaviors of their parents, so much so that family has been referred to as the "central mechanism for the transmission of culture" (Aldous & Hill, 1965). High correlations between parents and children have been found in areas such as religiosity, political views, education achievement, occupation, advocacy and leisure activities (Boyd & Richerson, 1985; Cavalli-Sforza, et al., 1982; Meeusen, 2014; Roksa & Potter, 2011). This is primarily due to a sense of cohesion and extended socialization from cohabitation. If, for any reason, the child does not

feel this sense of shared interest within their families, they will be less likely to adopt aspects of their culture as part of their own and will instead look to other sources of influence.

As mentioned earlier, religion is a very important aspect of an individual's culture. It guides behavior and influences other areas of social life. It has been linked to prosocial behavior, higher levels of social interaction with parents, and trust in research involving adolescents (Bartkowski, Xu, & Levin, 2008; Armet, 2009). Religious teachings can affect where an individual chooses to go to school, who they marry, how they raise their children and how they feel about public policies (Bisin et al., 2004). As with other aspects of culture, an individual's level of commitment to religious faith also influences how they will pass that tradition on to future generations.

The Role of Family in Religious Identity Formation

Adolescence has been shown to be a vital time in the development of personal identity. During this period, parents and peer groups provide the context for the formation of social identities. While they each contribute to the growth and development of the emerging adult, they play different roles in this process.

The family is the primary mechanism for socialization. Children learn, through modeling and observation, the beliefs and behaviors of those that they see as role models (Bao, Whitbeck, Hoyt & Conger, 1999). In this respect, parents and caregivers are in the unique position to mold their children within the framework of their religious culture.

Parent and family influence have been shown to be correlated with several outcomes in their adult children. Research has suggested that the family, and one's place in it, can affect

levels of adolescent independence, self-reliance, susceptibility to peer pressure, and responsibility (Benson & Johnson, 2009). This influence is mediated by the relationship between the role model, generally the parent or caregiver, and child. Children are more likely to follow the behaviors of their parents under certain conditions. Research has shown that role models who are viewed as being similar to them, either in respect to gender or personality, warmth, affection and emotionally close have the biggest impact on young children (Boehnke, Hadjar & Baier, 2007; Bao et al, 1999; Cashmore & Goodnow, 1985; Ogakaki & Bevis, 2009).

Homogenous couples have a strong influence in regards to the transmission of religion to their children, and research has shown that the desire to raise children in their own faith has a significant influence over who someone decides to marry (Bisin et al. 2004; Blackwell & Lichter 2004; Kalmijn, 1998). In cases where the couple did not initially share the same religious views, often the result was the less-devout spouse either converting to the religion of their spouse or abandoning their faith altogether (Nelson, 1990). In families where both parent are of the same faith, raising children in a certain religious tradition is shown to be highly successful. Research has shown that 92% of children adopt the religion of their parents when they come from a homogenous family, when compared to interfaith children the odds of a child choosing to adopt the religion of either parent is approximately 50/50 (Bisin et al., 2004). There are numerous studies showing high correlations between the religiosity, church attendance, and religious participation of the parents and that of their children (Bao et al, 1999; Cashmore & Goodnow, 1985). Studies have shown that these couples also have more stable marriages, with less instances of conflict and spousal abuse (Chinitz & Brown, 2001; Cunradi, Caetano & Schafer, 2002; Curtis & Ellison, 2002).

In spite of the potential benefits of same-faith marriage, there has been an increase in the number of interfaith marriages in the United States. Some polls suggest that the rate of interfaith marriage has increased to roughly 45% over the past decade alone (*Economist*, 2013). There have been many possible explanations, including limitations in the marriage market and a decrease in the importance of religious salience in spouse selection (Bisin et al., 2004).

While it has been shown that partner selection tends to follow religious lines to increase child religiosity, this does not imply that interfaith couples are not concerned with the cultural attitudes of their children. Several studies have shown that interfaith couples are just as concerned about the religious heritage of their children as homogenous couples (Bisin et al., 2004; Arweck & Nesbitt, 2010). It has also been suggested that interfaith couples may be just as effective in transmitting their religious beliefs to children as homogenous couples, especially when they are consistent in their attitudes and behaviors regarding religion (Arweck & Nesbitt, 2010; Bader & Desmond, 2006). There are several avenues which interfaith couples may take in regards to the religious upbringing of their children. Interfaith families generally opt to raise their children in one parent's religion, a mix of both parent's religions, or not in any religion (Arweck & Nesbitt, 2010; Edwards, Caballero, & Puthussery, 2010). Some research has suggested that in cases where only one religion is chosen, it is often that of the mother since women tend to be more religious than men and they are often the primary caregivers for the children (Zuckerman, 2009; Hadaway & Roof, 1988; Kosmin, Keysar, Cragun & Navarro-Rivera, 2009; Finke & Stark, 2000; Greeley, 1970).

The structure of the family itself may influence the amount of certainty the adolescent may have in their religious beliefs. Religious doubt has been found to be higher in families that

report low levels of parental religious cohesion and religious commitment (Kooistra & Pargament 1999; Hunsberger, Pratt & Pancer, 2002). Given that previous studies have already found that interfaith families report higher rates of both of these measures, it is expected that their children will also have more religious doubt than the children of same-faith couples (Myers, 1996). Religious doubt in children has also been linked to poor relationships with parents, particularly the mother (Puffer, Pence, Graverson, Wolfe, Pate & Clegg, 2008).

Despite the impact of familial influence, it is important to remember that identity formation does not occur in a contextual vacuum. The adolescent is constantly interacting with and being influenced by the social environment as well. Young adolescents are particularly susceptible to societal pressures, such as those from peer groups, especially when they lack a strong influence within the family. Previous studies have found a correlation between church attendance and individuals within the same peer group (Regnerus et al., 2004).

It is possible that some macro-level influences can alter how religion is transmitted as well. This includes factors such as race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status of the family, and the type of school the child attends. Research has suggested that African Americans are the most consistently religious racial group throughout emerging adulthood (Regnerus, et al., 2004). Research has also shown that the socioeconomic status of a family may alter how religion is passed within that family. In lower-income families the father tends to act as the primary religious teacher within the family, as opposed to higher-income families which tend to share the responsibility (Boehnke et al., 2007). Other studies have shown that in some instances, parents decide to raise their child in a religion based on educational opportunities or the religious makeup of their neighborhoods (Arweck & Nesbitt, 2010; Regnerus et al., 2004).

There have also been changes to the religious landscape of the United States which have also effected the transmission of religion.

Alongside these various influences, there is also a greater generational shift away from religion emerging. Over the past several decades there seems to have been a greater push towards secularization. According to national polls, there has been an increase in the number of individuals who claim to have no religion, with the number doubling from seven to fourteen percent on just ten years (Edgell, Gerteis & Hartmann, 2006; Hastings & Hoge, 1970; Hout & Fischer; Pew Forum 2007). This group of "nones," consist of atheists, agnostics, non-religious, and individuals who do not wish to be affiliated with a religious organization (Baker & Smith, 2009; Hadaway & Roof, 1979).

Although the nonreligious are found across social categories, there are some general patterns based on sex, ethnicity, education, age, and even region. Men tend to be less religious than women (Zuckerman, 2009; Hadaway & Roof, 1988; Kosmin, et al., 2009). Men make up over 50% of those in the "nonreligious," category and approximately 75% of both atheists and agnostics (Zuckerman, 2009; Kosmin et al., 2009). Men are also more likely than women to be apostates, or those who were religious at one time but have abandoned their faith (Hadaway & Roof, 1988; Zuckerman, 2009). "None's" are also more likely to identify as either Caucasian or of Asian descent (Zuckerman, 2009; Kosmin et al., 2009). Approximately 32% of Asian-Americans, 20% of whites, 17% of Hispanics, and 13% of African-Americans claim to have no religion (Zuckerman, 2009; Kosmin et al., 2009). They also tend to have higher levels of education. Compared to 27% of the general population, over 30% of atheists, and 40% of nonreligious and agnostics have graduated from college (Zuckerman, 2009; Kosmin et al, 2009).

Nonreligious are also younger, generally under the age of 30 and tend to live in the Pacific-Northwest and New England regions (Zuckerman, 2009; Kosmin et al, 2009).

HYPOTHESES

There are two research questions and seven hypotheses directing this research. Three of these are related to which factors predict religious preference in interfaith children. Four are associated with the level of religious doubt among interfaith children compared to similar same-faith families.

First, which factors predict the religious identification of children in interfaith families?

Research Question 1: *Which factors predict the religious identification of children in interfaith families?*

H1*: The likelihood that the child will follow a parent's religion will increase as the parent attendance increases; it is expected that children will follow the faith of the parent who attends religious services most often.*

Religiosity and religious attendance has been found to be highly correlated between parents and children (Bao et al, 1999; Cashmore & Goodnow, 1985). It is expected that the child will follow the religion of the parent who attends services most often.

H2*: It is expected that children will be more likely to adopt the religion of the parent which they have a close relationship.*

As suggested by previous research, children are more likely to model the behavior of the parent which they view as being bonded to them emotionally (Boehnke et al., 2007; Bao et al, 1999; Cashmore & Goodnow, 1985; Ogakaki & Bevis, 2009).

H3*: It is expected that being made fun of by peer groups will discourage children from adopting the religion of either parent or increase the likelihood that the child will follow neither parent's faith.*

Peer groups, particularly during adolescence, have the potential to alter many types of behavior, including religious behaviors (Costello, 2010; Monahan et al. 2009; Song & Siegel, 2008). It is expected that if peers have negative perceptions of religious activity, the adolescent may shy away from religious affiliation and visa-versa.

Secondly, how do family dynamics and peer attitudes influence the amount of religious doubt in children of interfaith families compared to those of similar same-faith households?

Research Question 2: *How do family dynamics and peer attitudes influence religious doubt in children of interfaith families compared to those of similar same-faith households?*

H4: The children of interfaith families will report having more religious doubt than the children of same-faith parents.

Previous research has suggested that religious doubt is correlated with both weak parental cohesion and low rates of religious commitment (Kooistra & Pargament 1999; Hunsberger et al., 2002, Myers 1996). Since interfaith parents have less cohesion in regards to religion and

tend to be less religious, it is expected that their children will exhibit higher rates of religious doubt.

H5: The strength of parent-child relationships will be negatively correlated with religious doubt.

Some research has suggested that children with poor relationships with their parents are more likely to experience greater religious doubt, particularly if that relationship is with their mother (Puffer et al. 2008). It is expected that children with poor parent relationship will have higher rates of religious doubt, and that this relationship will be more exaggerated in regards to the relationship with the mother.

H6: Parental religious attendance will be negatively correlated with religious doubt.

It is expected that children who have at least one parent who attends religious services more than the other will have more religious doubt. It is possible that this disconnect between parental attendance may signify lack of religious cohesion between the parents, resulting in increased religious doubt (Kooistra & Pargament 1999; Hunsberger et al., 2002).

H7: Positive peer influence will be negatively associated with religious doubt.

Religious doubt is expected to be lower for children who have not been made fun of by their peers for their religious beliefs than for those who have. Adolescents are very suseptable to social influence, and previous research has found a correlation between teen's measures of religiosity and that of other members of their social group (Song & Siegel, 2008; Regnerus et al., 2004).

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

NSYR Data Set

The data is drawn from the first wave of the *2003 National Study of Youth and Religion* survey (NSYR), downloaded from the Association of Religious Data Archives (ARDA). The survey was conducted by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill between July 2002 and April 2003. The survey was designed as a three part series for longitudinal research. The population for this dataset included adults over the age of 18 with at least one child in the home between the ages of 13 and 17 who live within the United States. Participants must have been able to complete the phone survey in either English or Spanish. A random digit dialing (RDD) sampling procedure was used for data collection. Respondents were contacted by phone to complete the survey. Only one parent was spoken to during the survey so the responding parent answered questions related to both themselves as well as their spouse when necessary. One teenage child from each household was also spoken to during the survey process. In families which had more than one child within the required age range, in order to help randomize the results, the child who had the most recent birthday at the time of the survey was interviewed. Data screening for this study has yielded 322 interfaith families and 947 same faith families.

Sample

Cases were selected from the NSYR data set based on several criteria. Since both of the research questions in the study involve the influence of both the mother and father on the child, only cases in which information for both parents was recorded were included. With the possibility that parents of intact families may differ from blended families in the amount of

influence that they have over the children, only those cases in which the family had not undergone a divorce or separation during the life of the child were included (PBREAKUP=0). In order to ensure that only those cases in which the child had two parents in the home, only those who reported being married or living with a partner were selected (PLIVE=1/2).

The first research question of the study also required that the parents be of different religious faiths. While the survey does contain an item which asks if the parents are of the same faith, in order to ensure that the data was not compromised based on a subjective measure, it was not used. Instead, the religion of each parent was found using two scales within the dataset related to faith and denomination which each parent affiliates with (PDENOM & PSPRELIG). These scales included over 80 different religious categories. While some studies have collapsed religious categories for simplification, the nature of the current research question required that the religious categories be maintained. These religious categories were then set against the gender of the responding parent (PSEX) in order to ascertain the religion of both the resident mother and resident father. These variables were then recoded into DADRELIGION and MOMRELIGION for the sake of clarity. Those cases where the father's religion and mother's religion were not the same were then isolated to create the sample for the multinomial regression model.

The secondary research question examines how family dynamics and peer attitudes influence the level of religious doubt in children of interfaith families compared to those of same faith families. The initial screening of cases for intact (PBREAKUP=0) and two-parent homes (PLIVE=1/2) were also used for this analysis. The interfaith sample used in the first analysis was also used in the second analysis, with the same faith families added for

comparison. For simplification, same faith families were limited to those in which the children follow the same faith as their parents. This increased the sample size for the second analysis to approximately 1,269 families, with 322 of them being interfaith and 947 being same faith families.

Variables Used in Multinomial Regression Model

Religious Identification. The dependent variable for the analysis was, "child's religious identity," specifically states, does the child claim the religion of the mother, the father, or some other religion. Since this question was not directly asked in the data set, it was discerned via other items within the dataset. The religion of the child was ascertained by combining items RELIG62 and ATHEIST1 with item CHURTYPE in order to complete the data on religious denomination. Due to the survey design, which involved skip patterns, not all questions were asked of each respondent. Combining the items allowed for the full range of religious affiliations which would have otherwise been lost. This new CHURTYPE item then reflected the same diverse categories as those for the resident mother and father, allowing for a cohesive comparison between the child and parents.

This item was then compared to the DADRELIGION and MOMRELIGION items in order to establish which religious affiliation the child followed. This was then coded as the child matching the religion of the mother, father or of neither parent. This data was then used to create the dependent variable for the multinomial regression, TEENMATCH (*Table 1*).

Table 1

Frequency for Dependent Variable: TEENMATCH

Parent with Whom Teen's Religion Matches	Frequency	%
Matches Mother	121	37.6
Matches Father	17	5.3
Matches Neither Parent	184	57.1
TOTAL	322	100.0

Parent-Child Relationship. Measures related to the quality of the relationship between each parent and the child were used. Previous studies have found that the quality of the parent-child relationship, such as perceived similarity and warmth and affection, affects the level of child's behavior and cultural modeling (Bao et al., 1999; Boehnke, et al., 2007; Kirkpatrick & Shavert, 1990). In the dataset, Likert scale items associated with the perceived closeness to both the resident mother (MOMCLOSE) and father (DADCLOSE) were included with 1 indicating a low degree of closeness and six indicating a high degree of closeness (*Table 2*).

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations

Variable	Range	Mean	Std. Dev.
MOMCLOSE (How close child feels to Mother)	1-6	5.041	.8763
DADCLOSE (How close child feels to Father)	1-6	4.514	1.2332

Parent Attendance. Previous studies have shown a high correlation between parental church attendance and religious participation, and similar measures in their children (Bao et al, 1999). Based on this, it is believed that the parent with the highest rate of attendance will also

have more influence over the religious preference of the child. The NSYR contains the rate of religious attendance for the responding parent only (PATTEND). PATTEND consists of a 7 point scale ranging from "1 - Never Attend" to "7 – More than Once a Week." This item, while not complete, was included to act as a baseline for parent attendance. While the dataset does not include items related to the frequency of attendance for both resident parents, we were able to establish which of the resident parents attended religious services more often. PATTEND recorded the average attendance of the responding parent, while PSLSPATT asked if the respondent's spouse attended more, less, or about the same as the respondent. These items were paired against PSEX to establish dummy variables for whether the resident mother or father attended church services more often. While this is a more subjective measure of parental attendance, it is the only way to include information on both parents given the limitations of the dataset. Descriptive statistics for each of these variables can be found below in Table 3.

Table 3

Frequency of PATTEND

Responding Parent Attendance	Frequency	%
Never	84	26.1
Few Times A Year	73	22.7
Many Times A Year	18	5.6
Once A Month	26	8.1
2-3 Times A Month	42	13.0
Once A Week	60	18.6
More Than Once A Week	19	5.9
TOTAL	322	100.0

Frequency of Parent Attendance

Relative Parent Attendance	Frequency	%
Father Attends More (0-1)	40	12.4
Mother Attends More (0-1)	176	54.7
Parents Attend the Same (0-1)	106	32.9
TOTAL	10.00	100.0

Peer Influence. Finally, the influence of the child's peers on their religious identification was also examined. Prior studies have shown that peer groups have a strong influence on adolescent behavior which may also be reflected in religious choice (Costello, 2010; Monahan et al, 2009; Song & Siegel, 2008). Measures included items from the data set measured if the children had ever been made fun of for their religious beliefs (MADEFUN1 & MADEFUN2). Since these measures account for religious and nonreligious persons separately, they have been merged into MADEFUN1 to reflect both subgroups (*Table 4*). This variable consists of a 4 point scale ranging from "1 – Never" to "4 – A Lot," the descriptive statistics for which can be seen below in Table 4.

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.
MADEFUN1 (1-4)	1.240	.6328

Demographics. Basic demographic items have been used to better organize the findings. These include questions of household income, race and ethnicity, gender, school type, parental education level, and age of teen at the time of survey. The items for income

(PINCOME), gender (TEENSEX), and the age of the teen (AGECATS) were not altered from the original data. Race (TEENRACE), was recoded into the dummy variable (WHITE) in order that Caucasian children may be compared to other races. The same technique was used to create a dummy variable for children who attend public school (PSCHTYP) rather than other types of schools. Parental education measures (PMOMEDUC & PDADEDUC) were collapsed across similar categories for each parent. The descriptive statistics for each of these variables can be found in Table A of the appendix. A number of the variables used in the analysis had missing data, including indicators of parental closeness (4 MOMCLOSE, 1 DADCLOSE), parent education (16 PDADEDUC, 9 PMOMEDUC), peer influence (2 MADEFUN), and income (115 PINCOME). These missing values were replaced by the mean value of each variable.

Variables Used in the Ordered Logit Model

Religious Doubt. The second research question compares the children of same and interfaith families on measures of religious doubt. Previous research has shown that religious doubt is associated with several aspects of the family unit. Among Protestant populations, low rates of religious commitment among parents were found to increase doubt in their children (Kooistra & Pargament 1999). Low levels of parental cohesion were also found to be associated with higher rates of religious doubt (Hunsberger et al, 2002). Studies have shown that both low religious commitment and low cohesion among interfaith couples compared to same faith couples, but the rates of doubt among the children of these groups have not been studied.

The dataset includes two measures of religious doubt (DOUBT1 & DOUBT2), one for religious and one for nonreligious respondents. These two scales have been merged into

DOUBT1 in order to create a cohesive measure to account for all religious doubt among the adolescents. DOUBT1 is a 4 point scale, ranging from “1- No Doubts” to “4- Many Doubts,” the statistics for which can be seen in Table 6. This will act as the dependent variable for the second analysis.

As with the first sample, cases were limited to intact families with two parents in the home. This analysis included both same and interfaith families from the dataset. The same-faith families in the sample were restricted to only those children who follow the faith of their parents. This will allow for a comparison between the same and interfaith children in regards to their levels of religious doubt.

The independent variables for the ordinal regression will draw upon the same inferences as in the first analyses. The measures of TEENMATCH will be used in the regression in order to compare each interfaith group to the same-faith group. The same parental closeness (MOMCLOSE and DADCLOSE) and peer influence (MADEFUN1) measures from the multinomial regression will be included as well. This second analysis also features the parent attendance item (PATTEND) as well as a binary variable indicating if the parents attend services at the same rate or not (ATTENDSAME). The demographic indicators will be the same as in the first analyses. As in the first analyses, a number of the variables used had missing data, including indicators of parental closeness (4 MOMCLOSE, 1 DADCLOSE), parent education (16 PDADEDUC, 9 PMOMEDUC), peer influence (2 MADEFUN1), and income (115 PINCOME). These missing values were again replaced by the mean value of each variable. The dependent variable, DOUBTS1, also had missing data. The values for these 3 cases could not be substituted without jeopardizing the findings, and were not included in the analysis.

Table 6

Prevalence of Religious Doubt by Family Dynamic

Same Faith Children	Frequency	%
No Doubts	489	51.7
A Few Doubts	307	32.5
Some Doubts	119	12.6
Many Doubts	30	3.2
Don't Know/Missing	2	0.002
TOTAL	947	100.0
Interfaith Children	**Frequency**	**%**
No Doubts	162	50.3
A Few Doubts	93	28.9
Some Doubts	42	13.0
Many Doubts	24	7.5
Don't Know/Missing	1	0.3
TOTAL	322	100.0

RESULTS

Which Factors Influence the Religious Preference of Interfaith Children?

The results measuring the influence of various predictor variables in adolescent religiosity are presented below. The final sample of interfaith families consisted of 322 cases. Of these cases, over half of the children surveyed (*57.1%*) responded that they did not identify with the religion of either parent, 37.6% claimed the religion of their mother, and only 5.3% followed the religion of their fathers (*see Table 1*). The gender of the child was evenly

distributed across the three categories except for those in the last group. Of those claiming the faith of their fathers, almost 65% were male adolescents. The model overall was significant ($p = .06$).

Parental Religious Attendance

As seen in the table below, (*H1*) "the religious attendance of the parent will be positively correlated with the child following the religion of parent who attends services most often," is supported (see Table 7). The religious attendance of the responding parent was found to be significant at predicting the child's religion in two conditions. As the rate of parent attendance increases, the child is more likely to adopt the religion of either the mother ($B = .687, p < .001$) or the father ($B = .659, p < .01$) than that of neither parent.

The binary indicators of which parent has the higher religious attendance, for both the mother and father, were found to be a strong predictor of religious preference for all three interfaith groups save for one exception. Higher attendance for the mother was significant in predicting those who follow the faith of their mother ($B = 18.329, p < .01$) or neither parent ($B = 32.134, p < .05$) (*see Table 7*). This implies that if the mother attends religious services more than the father, her children are approximately 18 times more likely to follow her faith than that of their fathers and approximately 32 times more likely to follow the religion of neither parent over the one of the father.

The attendance of the father was also found to be a significant predictor of the child's religious preference. Higher attendance for the father was found to be a significant in predicting that children will follow the faith of their father ($B = .169, p < .01$), or neither parent,

than that of their mother (*see Table 7*). This means that for those cases in which the father attends religious services more often than the mother, the children are more likely to identify with the religion of their fathers or of neither parent as opposed to selecting the religion of their mother.

The pattern of child preference is similar across parental religious attendance, implying that the child is more likely to select the faith of the higher attending parent, especially when the higher attendee is also the mother. In those cases however where the child did not follow the faith of the attending parent, they were more likely to follow neither parents faith. These findings are similar to those of previous research which found that children often follow the religion of the mother due to their tendency to be more religious than the fathers (Zuckerman, 2009; Hadaway & Roof, 1988; Kosmin et al., 2009; Finke & Stark, 2000; Greeley, 1970).

Parent-Child Relationship

There was only minimal support for (*H2*) "close parent-child relationships will be positively correlated with the child adopting the religion of that parent," within this study. The measure of the child's level of closeness to their mother was not found to be a significant predictor of religious preference within any of the categories. The level of closeness to the child's father was only found to be significant in one aspect (*see Table 7*). The closer that children reported being to their fathers, the more likely they were to follow his religion as opposed to neither parent's religion ($B = .533, p < .10$). No other parent-child relationship indicators were statistically significant. While these do follow the results of previous studies linking emotional closeness with modeling behavior, they are not as significant as expected nor

were they found in any of the mother closeness measures (Boehnke et al., 2007; Bao et al, 1999; Cashmore & Goodnow, 1985; Ogakaki & Bevis, 2009).

Peer Influence

There was no evidence to support (*H3*) "peer influence will be positively correlated with the child adopting a parent religion as opposed to neither parent," within the parameters of the current research (*see Table 7*). However, within the available sample the vast majority (*84.4%*) of respondents reported not being teased by peers due to their faith. Given a larger sample size, it is possible that there may have been more variation in the responses. It is also possible that the adolescents are selecting peer groups with whom they feel comfortable expressing their beliefs to avoid such influences.

Demographic Indicators

There were no significant patterns found among the demographic indicators. The ethnicity item was found to be only slightly significant in one category (*see Table 7*). White children, when compared to minority children, are more likely to select the faith of their mother than of neither parent ($B = .574, p < .10$) (Table 7). There were no significant findings between the other conditions.

Table 7

Multinomial Regression Analysis Comparing Adolescents Who Followed the Religious Faith of Their Mother, Father, or Neither

Variables in Analysis	*Same as Mother VS Father*	*Same as Neither VS Father*	*Same as Neither VS Mother*
Parent-Child Relationship			
Close to Mom	1.192	1.084	.909
Close to Dad	.608	.533*	.877
Parent Attendance			
Responding Parent Attendance	.959	.659**	.687***
Mom Attends More	18.329**	32.134**	1.753+
Dad Attends More	.169*	.711	4.216**
Peer Influence			
Made Fun of For Beliefs	.842	.830	.985
Gender of Teen			
Male	2.263	1.676	.741
Household Income			
Income	.818	.847	1.035
Parent Education			
Mom Education	.998	.984	.986
Dad Education	1.073	1.045	.974
School Type			
Public School	1.433	1.169	.816
Race/Ethnicity of Teen			
White/Caucasian	1.376	.791	.574+
Age of Teen			
Age	1.089	1.005	.923

Note: +< p .10;* < p .05; ** < p .01; *** < p .001,

two tailed tests.

How Do Family Dynamics Influence Religious Doubt in Adolescence?

The results measuring the influence of family dynamics and various other predictor variables on adolescent religious doubt are presented in Table 8. The final sample included 1,269 cases, consisting of 322 interfaith and 947 same-faith families. The model overall was significant ($p < .000$).

Religious Orientation

There was no support for (*H4*) "the children of interfaith families will report having more religious doubt than the children of same-faith parents," within the parameters of the current research. There was no significant difference between the interfaith and same-faith families in regards to religious doubt. Taken together, half (*50.4%*) of respondents reported not having any doubts regarding their faith, approximately one third reported having a few doubts (*31.0%*), a seventh (*13.8%*) report some doubts and less than 5% (4.5%) report having many doubts. Both the same and interfaith groups exhibited similar levels across each measurement level (*see Tables 6 and 8*).

It appears, based on these findings, that the lack of parental cohesion in regards to religious identification is not as important as previously thought. It is also possible, as suggested by some previous research, that religion is simply not as important in the lives of the interfaith parents when compared to their same-faith counterparts. Unfortunately given the limitations of the data set, information regarding the importance of religion for the responding parent's spouse was not collected and therefore was not included in the analysis.

Parent-Child Relationship

The analysis found significant support for both measures of parental closeness, supporting (*H5*) "Parent-child relationships will be negatively correlated with religious doubt." As expected, the measure of closeness for the both of the respondent's parents was negatively associated with measures of religious doubt (*see Table 8*). As the measure of closeness to the mother increases, the amount of religious doubt is expected to decrease by .107 units ($p < .05$). Unlike previous findings, the measure of closeness to the father was found to be more significant than that of the mother (Puffer et al., 2008). As the child relationship with the father increases, religious doubt of the child is expected to decrease by *.226* units ($p < .001$). Further research examining this relationship would be beneficial to the body of literature.

Parental Attendance

There was significant support for (*H6*) "parental religious attendance will be negatively correlated with religious doubt," within the study (*see Table 8*). If the mother reported attending church more often than her spouse, her child's level of religious doubt is expected to increase by *.222* units ($p < .05$). If the father attends more often than his spouse, his child's level of religious doubt is expected to increase by *.353* units ($p < .05$). While the level of significance is the same for each parent, the unit increase for the father's attendance higher than that of the mother's. This suggests that high attendance of the mother is more closely related to low rates of religious doubt in children especially if the father attends more than the mother.

Peer Influence

The analysis yielded significant support for *H7*. Peer Influence was found to be positively associated with higher levels of religious doubt (*see Table 8*). For each unit increase the child reports being made fun of for their religious beliefs, their amount of religious doubt is expected to increase by *.135* units ($p < .05$). Therefore those children who are made fun of by their peers due to their religious beliefs are more likely to doubt those beliefs.

Demographic Variables

Of the demographic variables included within the model, only two were found to be significant. The gender of the child was found to be a significant predictor of religious doubt. The analysis shows that the child's sex is associated with religious doubt (*see Table 8*). Being a male child decreases religious doubt by .218 log-odds units ($p < .01$). While previous studies have shown that men tend to be less religious than females overall, this suggests that they may be more secure in that belief than females are (Zuckerman, 2009; Hadaway & Roof, 1988; Kosmin et al., 2009; Finke & Stark, 2000; Greeley, 1970). Ethnicity was also found to be a significant predictor of religious doubt. Being a white child, as opposed to a minority, decreased religious doubt by .245 log-odd units ($p < .10$). This follows some previous research which has suggested that minorities, particularly African Americans, tend to be more religious tha nCaucasians (Jones, St. Peter, Fernandes, Herrenkohl, Kosterman, & Hawkins 2011). Further research would be needed to address possible gender differences in regards to both religious and nonreligious doubt.

Table 8

Ordinal Regression Analysis Comparing Religious Doubt in Interfaith and Same-Faith Adolescents

Variables in Analysis	*Ordered Log-Odds*
Dependent Variable	
Religious Doubt (Threshold)	
No Doubts = 1	-1.117
A Few Doubts = 2	.451
Some Doubts = 3	1.992*
Indicator Variables	
Religious Orientation	
Matches Mom	.075
Matches Dad	-.090
Matches Neither	-.136
Parent-Child Relationship	
Close to Mom	-.118^{+}
Close to Dad	-.152**
Parent Attendance	
Responding Parent Attendance	-.024
Parents Attend the Same	-.304**
Peer Influence	
Made Fun	.100
Demographic Variables	
Gender of Teen	
Male	-.218*
Household Income	
Income	.025

Ordinal Regression Analysis Continued

Variables in Analysis	*Ordered Log-Odds*
Parent Education	
Mom Education	-.027
Dad Education	.026
School Type	
Public	-.044
Race/Ethnicity	
White/Caucasian	-.245^{+}
Age of Teen in Years	
Age	.031

Note: $^{+}$< p .10;* < p .05; ** < p .01; *** < p .001, two-tailed tests.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was two-fold: to better understand how family and peers can influence the religious identification of children of interfaith children and how family dynamics and peers may influence the amount of religious doubt in both same and interfaith families.

In regards to interfaith families, the results of the first analysis suggest that the most influential factor related to religious identification were those measures related to parental religious attendance. As parent attendance increases, the child is more likely to follow a parent religion. However, when the parents attend at different rates, the children are more likely to follow the faith of the parent who attends services most often, or to identify with neither

parent's religion. This supports previous research on religious transmission between parents and children (Bao et al, 1999; Cashmore & Goodnow, 1985).

The study also found a large disparity between those children who identify with a parent religion and some third-party religion, with the vast majority (57%) following a religion which was not in line with either parent (*see Table 1*). These findings follow the research done by King and Mueller in regards to "spiritual capital" (2003). Interfaith families, lacking a strong, cohesive religious foundation, have less opportunity to pass either parent's religion on to their children (King & Mueller, 2003; Bader & Desmond, 2006; Myers, 1996; Gniewosv & Noack, 2012).

This does not imply that interfaith children are not religious, only that they are more likely to follow a religion of their choosing. This sentiment is one that was suggested in previous research by Smith and Denton, who found that adolescents tend to not adhere to specific religious doctrine (2005). According to their research, adolescents instead select aspects common to most world religions, such as being happy, kind, and fair to others (Smith and Denton, 2005). In this regard, it matters little what particular religion they identify with, as many tend to "cherry pick," only these aspects of it. While the NSYR does contain data for individual aspects of faith, examining these particular variables are outside of the limitations of the current study.

The second analysis explored how family dynamics and peer attitudes influence the amount of religious doubt between same and interfaith families. While the religious structure of the family was not found to be significant, there were several variables within the model which did reach statistical significance. The quality of the parent-child relationship, whether or

not the parents attend religious services at the same rates, as well as the ethnicity and gender of the child were found to be key indicators of religious doubt.

Those who reported having close relationships with their parents, particularly with their fathers, reported less religious doubt than those who do not. This follows previous research which has shown that poor parent-child relationships are correlated with high rates of religious doubt (Puffer et al., 2008). One difference between the findings of this study and that done by Puffer et al (2008) is that they found that the relationship with the mother was the stronger indicator or religious doubt, whereas we have found the relationship with the father to be more significant.

Children whose parents attend religious services at the same rate, regardless of how often that may be, reported less religious doubt than those children whose parents attended at different rates. This follows previous research which found that strong religious cohesion between the parents was correlated with low levels of religious doubt (Kooistra & Pargament 1999; Hunsberger et al., 2002). Contrary to Myers (1996), who found high religious attendance predicted low levels of religious doubt, the current study found no significant relationship between the two measures.

One limitation of this analysis is the lack of an objective measure of religious attendance for the responding parent's spouse. Reducing the available survey items to only a set of binary indicators, while it does allow us to see which parent attends more often, does not allow for the depth of analysis which could be achieved if there was an ordinal measure for each parent. Future research would benefit from reassessing these findings using a different survey

instrument or more qualitative data. In particular, the literature would benefit from 1) a more in-depth look at the decision-making process used by parents into how they select the religion in which to raise their children as well as 2) the child's feelings and perceptions of that experience and how it has helped influence their own religious identity.

Overall, this research has helped to contribute to our knowledge of interfaith children. The findings from this research both support previous findings as well as illuminate some inconsistencies with the literature. While there were limitations associated with using an existing data set, this research was able to identify several significant findings. This study found further evidence supporting the importance of cohesion in regards to parental practices, regardless of what those may be, and strong parent –child relationships in both the successful transmission to children and increased certainty of religion for those children.

Religion is an important element in the heritage of many families, often viewed as a moral compass to help guide them through life. With the prevalence of interfaith relationships, more research is required to understand how these families fit into the ever-changing religious landscape. These gradual shifts in how religious faith is passed on, and what aspects of it are passed, could have a considerable effect on the future of churches and how religion is discussed in society.

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APPENDIX

Table A

Demographic Variables Used in the Statistical Analyses

Variable	Frequency	%
Household Income (PINCOME)		
1- Less Than $10,000	12	0.9
2- $10-20,000	34	2.7
3- $20-30,000	79	6.2
4- $30-40,000	131	10.3
5- $40-50,000	157	12.4
6- $50-60,000	153	12.1
7- $60-70,000	111	8.7
8- $70-80,000	101	8.2
9- $80-90,000	84	6.6
10- $90-100,000	76	6.0
11- $100,000+	236	18.6
Gender of Child (TEENSEX)		
Male	629	49.3
Female	643	50.7
Age of Child (AGECATS)		
13	251	19.8
14	235	18.5
15	283	22.3
16	257	20.3
17	243	19.1

Race of Child (WHITE)		
White/Caucasian (1)	920	72.5
Other (0)	349	27.5
Father's Education (PDADEDUC)		
0- No School	3	0.2
1- Elementary	38	3.0
2- Some High School	69	5.4
3- HS/GED	264	20.8
4- Some College	202	15.9
5- Votec/AA Degree	163	12.8
6- Bachelor's	271	21.4
7- Some Grad School	23	1.8
8- Master's	156	12.3
9- PhD/Professional	66	5.2
Missing data	14	1.1
Mother's Education (PMOMEDUC)		
0- No School	1	0.1
1- Elementary	31	2.4
2- Some High School	47	3.7
3- HS/GED	294	23.2
4- Some College	236	18.6
5- Votec/AA Degree	196	15.4
6- Bachelor's	250	19.7
7- Some Grad School	38	3.0
8- Master's	144	11.3
9- PhD/Professional	25	2.0
Missing data	7	0.6